

Remarks by U.S. Trade Representative Susan C. Schwab
The Signing of the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement
Washington, DC – June 30, 2007
As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Secretary Gutierrez, for your introduction and for being here this morning.

What a great day for our two countries. What a great day for international trade. In just a few minutes, two nations, whose prosperity and economic dynamism rests in no small part to global trade and investment, will affirm their commitment to the free flow of commerce by signing a landmark free trade agreement.

I am very pleased to see that on the Saturday before the U.S. Independence Day there are over 200 people in attendance, including many distinguished government officials and business leaders, here to witness our signing of this Agreement. I think that the turnout this morning is a testament to the historic importance of this FTA – not only as a milestone in the bilateral relationship between the United States and Korea, but also as a symbol of the future promise of global trade.

In addition to Secretary Gutierrez, I would also like to thank a few people in particular for coming today to celebrate this auspicious occasion with us, including Mack McLarty, a key champion of free trade; former USTR and Secretary of Labor William Brock; former USTR Clayton Yeutter; former U.S. Ambassador to Korea Thomas Hubbard; and Bill Rhodes, who has been instrumental in his role as Chairman of the U.S.-Korea Business Council. Of course, I echo the sentiments of appreciation

expressed by Amb. Bhatia for the support and dedication of our interagency colleagues and the important role they played in getting us to this day.

And, while they were not able to be with us today, I would also like to thank both Ambassador Vershbow and Ambassador Lee for their tireless efforts to bring this deal to closure.

What we have accomplished.

The deal that we are going to sign today represents a tremendous achievement, and both the United States and Korea have every reason to be excited about what we have accomplished together.

We have agreed to eliminate tariffs on consumer and industrial goods.

We have expanded markets for each others' ranchers and farmers.

We have further opened our services markets to each other.

We have made commitments to ensure robust intellectual property rights, labor protections, and environmental standards.

We have broken new ground in such areas as competition, regulatory policy, and transparency.

And, we have ensured strong protections for investors of both countries. By entering into and implementing high standards of investment protection through this

Agreement, Korea is building on its recent efforts to attract foreign investment and is becoming a regional economic hub in Northeast Asia and a world-class investment destination.

We know there are some who believe this agreement must be altered. But I want to affirm that this agreement, once signed, will stand on its own, without amendment. I believe that between now and when the Congress votes on the KORUS FTA, with the help of all of you in this room, Congress will come to understand the details and learn just how compelling a deal it is.

Shared Challenges Going Forward

The United States and Korea have shown the world that two advanced, industrial countries were able to agree on a gold standard FTA. What is more impressive is that we did it in only one year.

I salute the negotiators from both countries. Ambassador Bhatia and Trade Minister Kim, your skill and pragmatic judgment served both countries so well. I also want to praise Wendy Cutler and Ambassador Kim Jong-hoon, who so ably represented the people of their countries while respecting the sensitivities and priorities of their counterparts on the other side of the table over the last year. These negotiations were not without controversy from time to time, but there is a Korean proverb that says, “A turtle only travels when it sticks its neck out.” Both negotiating teams stuck their necks out and traveled far! Let’s show our appreciation for their great efforts.

Of course, our work together on the KORUS FTA will continue beyond today. The task before us now is to ensure that both Korea's National Assembly and the U.S. Congress approve the KORUS FTA.

I wish I could say that this will be a lot easier than concluding the deal. But, we have a lot of work ahead of us to educate lawmakers. I use the word educate rather than convince because I firmly believe that as members of both our legislatures come to appreciate the enormous benefits of the Agreement – and once the myths our critics have already started to spread are dismantled – the KORUS FTA will attract broad support.

But let me emphasize that this education process will take energetic and passionate efforts by all of those who support the KORUS FTA.

I must note that this is the last FTA to be signed under the current Trade Promotion Authority. In a little over 12 hours, the President's authority to effectively conclude FTAs will expire.

As we look toward extending TPA, the KORUS FTA should stand out as a great example of why TPA is so important. The KORUS FTA will create new opportunities for the United States consistent with the objectives and parameters established by Congress.

The United States must not be on the sidelines as Korea and other countries in Asia and other parts of the world deepen and strengthen their trade ties. America's economic future depends heavily on more free trade agreements like the one we are about to sign with Korea.

Conclusion

So, today is really a commencement ceremony of sorts. It is not only a celebration of one hard-earned accomplishment, but also a kickoff of efforts to achieve another – the approval and implementation of this historic free trade agreement.

Thank you to all. Congratulations. And let us move on together to the next steps in this important undertaking.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Korea's Trade Minister. He is a talented and tough negotiator who never lost sight of the ultimate prize.

Mr. Minister, thank you for courage, hard work and vision. You have done a great service to your country and to the cause of free trade. Minister Kim...